

Pacific Northwestern Native American Tribes and Their Connections to Local Animals

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Abstract

For this project, the focus was on the changing relationships between people in the local tribes and the animals that shape and influence their lives. In researching this topic, we found that the geographical location of the tribes did not affect the use of the animals as much as the traditions behind the animals specific to each tribe, and many tribes had very similar traditions and uses for animals across the Pacific Northwest. While animals like salmon, deer and elk are all for consumption and multi-use, other animals, such as the woolly dog, were raised as a pet. Some of these animals are still common today, others are rarer or even endangered, post contact with European settlers. This project hopes to inform the general public about these connections and show that many of these traditions continue even today. To make accessible to the greatest number of people possible, this paper will be adapted into a poster to be hung in a community area, with maps, photos and information to reach all age ranges.

Background

During the last major ice age, that ended about 12,000 years ago, peoples from Asia migrated over the land bridge and into north America. These people moved all across the continent, some going as far as Mexico and central America and some staying in Alaska and northern Canada. Some, however migrated to the pacific northwest and settled into the area now known as Washington. This migration and settlement took hundreds of years until each tribe was settled and even then they were still moving, such as with the tribes located in the great plains of America. In the northwest many tribes settled and made it their home. Many tribes were very small and only consisting of large extended families. This was the typical native American tribe. It wasn't until white people that the natives were clumped together into bigger tribes such as the

Salish and Snoqualmie. One of the most interesting things about the natives was how they used the land and its resources. How they bonded with the land and made it their own. A lot of the tribes made the animals gods and respected them. One tradition in particular was the harvesting of a whale each year by the Makah Nation. They would use the entire whale. They would use the bones for tools and utensils, the blubber for insulation, and the skin for clothes. Animals are very important to the tribes they are their gods, their culture, their past. Native Americans have very interesting relationships with wildlife in the northwest. This essay seeks to investigate and tell the stories, history, and uses of animals to the northwest native American tribes.

Introduction

There are over 40 Native American Tribes in the Pacific Northwest, in an area that stretches from current day Southern Alaska to Southern Oregon.

Methods

Much of the research done for this project was done through online sources and talking to Steven Mullen-Moses, who directly works with the Snoqualmie Tribe as the Director of Archaeology and Historic Preservation who has a connection with the stories and everyday uses of some of these animals through his work. Historical websites such as History Link, the Burke Museum, and other scientific publications were used to collect accurate information directly from the tribes, versus second or thirdhand.

Discussion

Marine and Aquatic Animals

The use of marine animals was vital to many tribes' continuing success. The salmon were "abundant in the waters, and became the most important food resource" (Goldi Productions Ltd. 2007) of many of the local tribes, like the Coastal Salish, Suquamish and Snoqualmie people.

The absence of many major rivers with salmon runs meant that fishing was performed many ways, using nets, spears and traps (2015 Suquamish Tribe, Steven Mullen-Moses). Still an important part of the Pacific Northwest Native American culture today, salmon are continually very important as a food source and as a tradition. Other fish were commonly caught and eaten by the Coastal Salish, in a study done by the Burke Museum, 57 types of fish and reptiles were common foods, as well as 51 types of shellfish and other marine life. While only specific data was drawn from the Coastal Salish archeology sites, the huge diversity of food was native to the entire Pacific Northwest, making it likely that many of these foods were eaten by many local tribes through hunting or trading.

Land Animals Used Exclusively for Food and Materials

Mountain Goats

- Used for fur, food, hoofs became tools (Snohomish)
- Relocation plan to north Cascades
- Mt. St. Helens wiped out 15 goats in 1980
- Very important to Cowlitz tribe, used to make blankets and thread, restarting wool gathering practice
- Sauk-Suiattle tribe is creating a model of mountain goat's habitats to increase chances of survival

Deer/Elk

- Caught mostly in summer using spears and other projectile weapons
- Live in Cascades
- Used for food, hides, hoofs and antlers for tools

Wooly Dogs

- Flocks in Coast Salish Tribes
- Raised as pets, fur was used to create woolen woven pieces
- Now extinct by around 1858
- Small with long hair, desired long hair trait is thought to be recessive
- Archeological samples done across PNW and remains found
- A good replacement for goat fur, no sheep wool in north America pre-contact

Conclusions

The most vital information gained from this project is the continued importance of animals presently to the tribes, and how the history of use has been reflected in present society. Animals such as the wooly dog are now extinct or have evolved into other variations of animals that we have now. Some animals have been forced out of their habitats by civilization, but there has been a push to reintroduce the animals displaced back into their natural habitat. The introduction of reservations in the 1800's meant that Tribes were removed from their land, and often had to leave the animals or hunting grounds behind. The issues that this project ran into was the lack of available information from the Tribes' perspective, much of the information collected and recorded was post-contact with European immigrants, and some of this history is biased or misrepresented. There are also parts of traditions that are only available to members of the tribes that hold more significance or secrecy than other general information, so understandably some of the knowledge is not for public use. For any others following up this project, the recommendations given would be to do more in person interviews with the different local tribes to enhance the depth of knowledge, or a study on the current levels of animals studied in this project and a prediction of those numbers in the future.

Acknowledgments

Done as part of the archeological internship partnering Tesla STEM High School with the City of Redmond. Thanks to Kim Dietz and Tom Hardy for providing the opportunity and leading the internship for seven months. A special thanks to the Snoqualmie Tribe, Steven Mullen-Moses, their Director of Archaeology & Historic Preservation for working with us to enhance and give us more information that was collected.

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Footnotes

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Tables

Table 1

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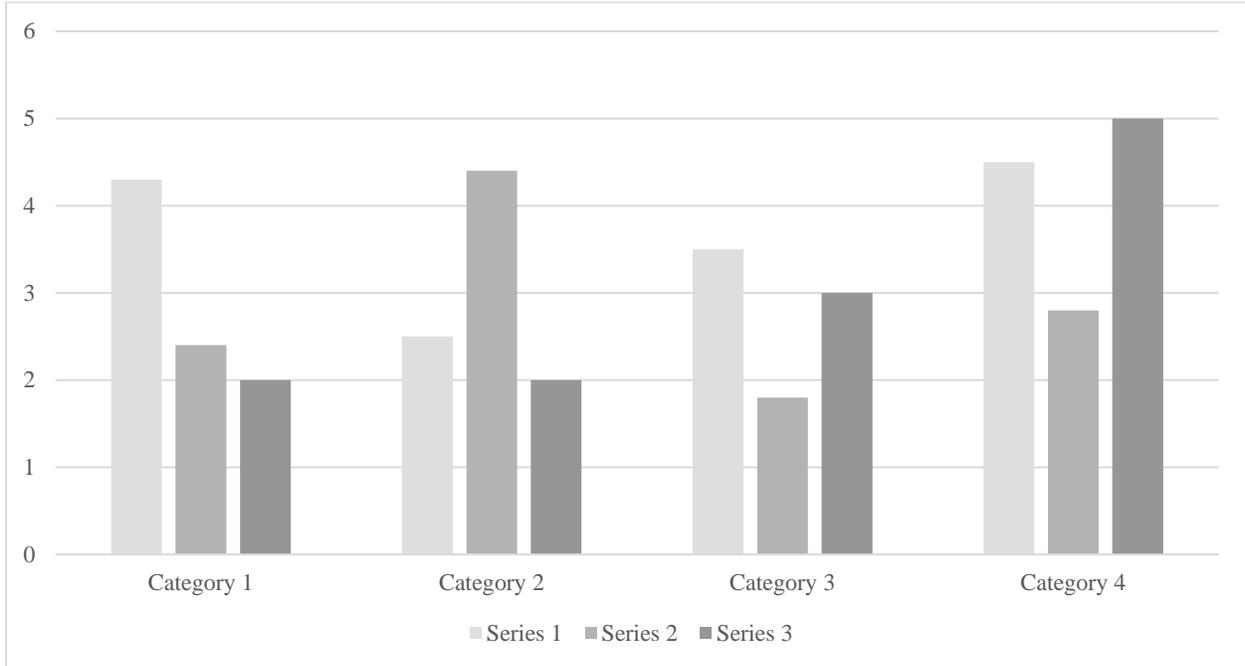


Figure 1. [Include all figures in their own section, following references (and footnotes and tables, if applicable). Include a numbered caption for each figure. Use the Table/Figure style for easy spacing between figure and caption.]

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